Critical Evaluation of Gender Biasness and Sexuality in the Works of Meena Kandasamy

A
Synopsis
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Supervised by:

Dr. Kalpna Rajput

Submitted by:

Ritu Rani

Enrol. No. JVR-II/22/11048

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Faculty of Management and Humanities

Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur (Rajasthan), India

Men and Women are complementary to one another and are among God's best creations. They are not better than one another. They have not been treated fairly since the beginning, taking into account their standing in their families and communities around the world. However, due to India's patriarchal social structure, there are inequalities among the sexes, particularly in the provisions of the supremacy and liberty they both enjoy (or do not). In literature, male dominance of women is a common theme. The significance of human experiences is captured in literary works, which are written in a creative and valuable language with a personal touch that includes concept, feeling, motivation, and expression.

The term ‘Patriarchy’ refers to the institutionalized dominance of men over women in economic, social, or political roles. Numerous literary genres, including prose, theatre, poetry, and even sacred texts, illustrate this patriarchy. Women in literature are merely the subject of men's work, complete with their biases and points of view. Due to this attitude, women were treated as lower-class people with no ability to speak for themselves; instead, women's remarks represented the voice of males.

In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir stated that men had the hegemony in the creation of creative works in classical literature. She added that women are inferior and are not given the opportunity to express themselves. They are listed as the writing's object, not its subject. Basic issues affecting women cannot be divorced from these issues. These deal with sexuality and gender.

The themes and worries relating to gender and sexuality are highly delicate in literary works. These problems, which can take many different forms, are thought to lower morality and spirituality. In contrast, it is taboo in some societies to discuss gender, sex, and sexuality in literature. Sex is the phrase used to refer to the biological

construction, whereas gender implies the socially generated connotation. As a result, sex comes naturally but gender is socially nurtured. Numerous authors have been motivated to compose literary works that address the problems of gender and sexuality prejudice in the modern period.

Sophisticated customs, a male-dominated culture, and native customs that separate women from their bodies have always been challenges for women. The patriarchal canon has been undermined over time by the adoption of written narratives, which marked their entrance into public discourse. Today, the stereotype of the typical woman of India is somewhat obsolete. Since the onset of the age, Indian women writers of the post modern period have ventured to dispel the myth of the man subjugated societal structure and redefine themselves as the category of 'new' woman, who expresses her prejudice, uniqueness, and sexuality by renouncing the use of her body for the purposes of other people's control.

The force of the persistent attempts made by Indian women writers to carve out their own 'space' in society may be seen in Indian English literature. It is crucial to comprehend how the idea of gender prevents both sexes from enjoying equal rights and treating one other fairly. The various ways that 'gender' is expressed include 'gaps', 'discrimination', 'bigotry', 'biasness' and 'inequality'. These numerous ways of expressing 'gender' create a network of stereotypes about masculinities and femininities that promote marginalization through 'gender roles' on all fronts, including the family and the workplace. Women's writings try to challenge how gender relations and roles are seen and emphasize the repressive structures of patriarchal beliefs in order to reveal the hidden intentions. Feminism examines these oppressive structures to help women expose the hegemonic dominant mechanisms that kept them in subjugation.

Men and women respond differently in social circumstances depending on cultural, social, political, and economic considerations. The structural inequality between men and women is based on the gender gap. The social, cultural, and psychological systems present in society serve to maintain gender-based discrimination. Gender inequality and the issue of social marginalization go hand in hand.

In their creative works, Indian writers have frequently addressed the issue of gender discrimination. A number of well-known Indian women authors, including Shashi Deshpande, Anita Nair, Anita Desai, S. P. Kundu, Kiran Desai and Meena Kandasamy have broken free from convention and portrayed the 'New Woman' in their works. Women are no longer solely viewed as domestic helpers, timid, or subservient. Because of the influence of education, women have also come to understand the wonders that education can perform in their lives. The explanation is that she has realized that the man's dominance over her and infliction of intolerable mental and physical agony is a result of her economic reliance.

Modern or New woman is aware about her own life and that no one, including her family, society, religion, or country, has the right to control it and treat her solely as someone's daughter, wife, or mother. In order to adopt the role of an independent, self-constituting subject, the contemporary woman desires to set free from conventional authorities and badge of dependent individual. All of this is especially true of Meena Kandasamy's writings. She through her writings makes sincere and honest efforts to highlight the stress put on women to control their sexual inclinations.

Indian poet, novelist, translator, and activist Meena Kandasamy resides in Chennai. Her works generally focus on casteism and feminism. She is the pioneer Indian to write Dalit poetry in English, and through her poetry, she speaks out against

the systematic oppression of Indian women and gender injustice. Her poetry is not the result of her reading or expertise, but rather of her own experiences and involvement in the caste and gender equality movement.

Ms. Millitancy (2010) and *Touch* (2006) are her two poetry volumes. Her novels include "*When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife"* (2017) and *The Gipsy Goddess* (2014). She is one of the most outspoken young Indian women today, fighting for justice and equality. In *when I Hit You*, she describes the social seclusion and physical abuse her newlywed husband inflicts on her. In reality, thousands of other women's stories of experiencing violence in the bedroom are echoed throughout the book. The novel provides a potent feminist analysis of escape and self-actualization. The Brahmanical Hindu society dominated by caste and the patriarchy are the targets of *Ms. Militancy*, a collection of unapologetically critical poetry.

Touch is a corrosive, violent protest against the persistence of subjugation women in societal set up in India (Kandasamy, 2006). The problem of sexually harassment of female is covered. Meena Kandasamy, in contrast to earlier poets and writers on the subject, depicts female community, chiefly women concerning with backward castes, as rebellions fighting against discrimination and advocating the equality for women rather than as the objects of higher caste men's lust. Women are viewed as chattels in the male-dominated culture. Men from all castes and classes work together to establish certain social norms that restrict female growth and keep her within the confine of her house.

Meena Kandasamy criticises patriarchal society for treating women like slaves and things in one of her poems published in *Touch*, titled *Songs of Summer*. She is adamantly against the stereotypically male-biased Indian ritual of girl viewing, which

is meant to assess a girl's suitability for marriage. The criteria used to judge a potential bride include her feminine identity, submissiveness, politeness, character, physical health and education, among other things. The young man who wants to tie the knot with her, however, is not evaluated based on all of these factors.

In today's society, gender bias is a pervasive social problem that is still prevalent. Domestic violence and rejection of prerequisite human rights are frequent occurrences for women in her place of employment. Because of how bad things are for them, they end up playing the role of weak, timid victims who can do nothing to stop the wrongs done to them. Meena Kandasamy advocates for gender equality in her writings by delving into the system of female oppression and voicing her concerns about it. Hers is a harsh critique of the social problems brought on by the systemic sex dominance of women. She advances the cause of gender parity with her sharp ideas and direct writing.

Research Problem:

Since literature preserves the stamp of the past, present, and future, it is a very flexible tool. All works that exhibit a decisive understanding of the subordination of women and gender as a problematical group are considered to be feminist literature. However, because feminism's rise is typically attributed to the West, names like Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, Judith Butler, Elaine Showalter, Meena Kandasamy, and others come to mind when one thinks about it. Though the field of ‘Women's Studies’ began to take off in the United States in the late 1960s and later spread to other first world nations in the 1970s, post-colonial feminists argue that because females are not all the same, their practices are diverse.

Feminism is diverse and we all live in a world of feminism, one cannot understand history in universal terms that ignore cultural variation. The experiences of

a woman vary depending on where she lives: India, Kenya, etc. The difficulties faced by Indian women are different from those faced by women around the world. Since wifehood has traditionally been the fundamental basis of identity of a woman in patriarchal India, where women are seen as weak, dependent, and subservient, devotion and chastity have been used as role representatives to limit women's sexuality. Radha Chakravarty asserts that benevolent paternalism, a system that rewarded women for conformity and made subjection invisible, was the driving force behind patriarchy in India. Furthermore, mythology has taught women that true power rests in their ability to sacrifice and deny themselves access to authority.

Many female writers have contributed to the respectable position of Indian writing in English today by bringing to light aspects of their lived experiences that their male counterparts have ignored or kept hidden. The majority of these female authors, who are recognised as feminist writers, have shown the core of their female literary figures longing for their own space and to understand their value as unique people. The struggle of women to articulate their identities in the 21st century, in contrast, has given literary writers and critics the chance to rethink subjectivity as voice, agency, and empowerment. These topics will be discussed in the research work in relation to the select literary expressions in order to untie gender biasness and sexuality faced by the females in the works of Meena Kandasamy.

Review of Related Literature:

Dhingra, Kanupriya in her study have shown the female self in the backdrops of Dalit community in Meena Kandasamy's famous literary expression *Ms. Militancy*. The investigator stated that Kandasamy presents a different vision of dalit ladies and she has also taken her female protagonists from Indian mythology. Her poetic expression is a protest against the ethnicity of words, which has given rise to an

subjective image. Her poetry, at times graphic, challenges the earthly and celestial binaries. One clearly recognises the confinement suffered and the freedom sought. This study examines Kandasamy's poetry collection *Ms. Militancy* highlights poet's endeavours to break through Western Feminism's inclination to generalize the experiences of female community.

Mattam, Anita J. "Projection of 'New Woman' in Meena Kandasamy's Poems: An Analysis." The study revealed that Kandasamy has addressed numerous contentious topics that women face in society, such as untouchability, casteism, disdain for women, and apostasy. It sheds radiance on poet's concerns pertaining to feminist in her poetry in order to make women - particularly the marginalised Dalit - awaked of their plight, particularly in connection to the repercussions of patriarchal discrimination and women's societal upbringing.

Subbulakshmi, A.Subaltern Literary Concept- Subjugation of Untouchables in Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess.* The findings of the study stated that Meena's paintings represent the voice of the Dalits, the people at the bottom of India's historic caste system. Despite the fact that the Indian constitution guarantees equality, they endure prejudice. The study reveals cultural beliefs that allocate people to specific roles based on caste or gender. In portraying the 1968 slaughter of forty-four untouchable children, man and woman revolting for greater pay in Kilvenmani village, Tanjore district, her novel *The Gipsy Goddess* blurred the line between fiction and massive critique. This work delves into several Dalit themes such as injustice, inequality, the pattern of identity, economic backwardness, lack of jobs, and the treatment of Dalits. Dalits have long faced such discrimination as a result of their caste.

Premalatha. “Dalit’s woman Exclusion in the selected novels of Meena Kandasamy and Urmila Pawar.” The researched found that the caste system in India has a long and deep history, and it appears to be a lengthy and lasting component of Indian civilization and social order. Those who live and experience it, whether in practise or as a survival strategy, tend to adhere to it through acquired behaviours and perceptions. Attitudes have shifted in various ways. However, there appears to be a core blueprint that remains constant. Men have complete authority in a traditional patriarchal society. Men are thought to be at the top of the hierarchy because they are thought to be the most astute and thus the most likely decision makers. Doubting a patriarchal leader by a female is an uncommon event and is regarded as an extremist cultural behaviour that frequently leads in societal punishment.

Fathima, Shaziya. “Feminism and Social Disparity in the Poems of Maya Angelou and Meena Kandasamy: A Study”. The analysis revealed that gender discrimination is heavily affected by societal disparities based on race, caste and colour. Angelou is a Black American belonging to black community, whereas Kandasamy is a Poet belonging to Dalit community - two parallel lines. Their poems show and portray the topic intellectually, bringing forth the agony of society's disadvantaged women.

Patni, Gunja. “Re-interpreting Myths and Re-configuring Resistance: A Critical Study of Meena Kandasamy’s *Ms Militancy”*. The study revealed that the goal of the present study was to reinterpret Hindu and Tamil mythology, ancient scriptures, and popular folk stories in order to unleash power and sexual politics. It also questions how, in the sake of tradition, women's sexuality is repressed, causing a Sita to be harmed and a Draupadi to be wrecked. Finally, it targets women, particularly Dalit women, who are victims of horrific violence as a result of double

colonisation and are seeking their identity and individuality, as well as space and independence.

Justification of the Study

The thesis put forwards analysis of a few of Meena Kandasaamy's writings that focus on the place of women in society in terms of sexuality, gender bias, social boundaries, and patriarchal forces and power. Examining her perceptions of the female characters, their bodies, sexual urges, plight, and unfair treatment due to class and caste variables in Indian society would be possible through this study. It will examine the discrepancies and falls in the efforts to accomplish the previously mentioned parameters to exercise autonomy among female literary figures residing in diverse class patterns and family based relationships.

Research Questions

Thus, the current study will look into the following questions: Is the woman constrained in two ways by traditionalism? Can she strike a balance between society conventions and her agency? How is she constrained by societal standards, social customs, and cultural mores? Will she be able to live a free life of her own choosing when this situation is over? What kind of identity subjugation does the patriarchal colonization of the bodies of females want to achieve? Is the economically independent woman able to resist stereotypes, or does she gives up on her aspirations? Women want to change or move their focus from financial privileges to communal and sexual rights, but will they be successful in doing so? Under the umbrella of customs, is her sexuality being proscribed? Is the female figure capable enough to refuse to accept biased societal norms and struggle against gender inequality?

Thus, the following inquiries will be looked into in this research: Is the woman restrained out of respect for tradition? Is she able to balance her own needs with those

of society? How is she restricted by social and cultural norms? What kind of identity subjugation does patriarchal colonisation of women's bodies want to achieve? How can she leave this situation with her freedom to live her own life? Does the woman maintain her passion and ambition or does she succumb to stereotypes? Will women be able to go from having only economic rights to having social and sexual rights?

Objectives:

1. To provide better understanding and appreciation of the works of Meena Kandasamy.
2. To explore the elements of Gender biasness in the works of Meena Kandasamy.
3. To explore the elements of sexuality and feminism in the works of Meena Kandasamy.
4. To express the themes prevailing in the major works of Meena Kandasamy and to explore the modes and methods that the female characters adopted in deal with the oppressive forces.
5. To study different techniques and skills employed by Kandasamy in her works.

Research Methodology

For this study, the investigator will employ a descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative research is focused with gathering and analysing data in as many formats as possible. Thus, the qualitative technique is appropriate for analysing, explaining, and narrating facts in words or paragraphs. The technique will include thorough reading, comprehending, and comparing and contrasting the primary texts picked for study. The societal and culture based framework in which the writers express will be established using books on women's writing, sociology, psychology and studies

pertaining to female community and gender studies. Numerous dissertations, articles, essays, theories and other critical works on caste-based discrimination, gender bias, sexuality, marital boredom, abuse, women's hardship, identity crises, sexual identities, marital rape and body politics in general will be used to support the findings. The purpose is to concentrate on research that promotes novel comprehending in the arena of Feminist Studies by studying the current condition of women in society through the use of new modes and approaches to break free from the clutches of discrimination and exploitation.

Following the discovery of the data, the investigator conducted some actions. First, the investigator described the culture and social situation of the texts and determined the type of gender and sexuality discrimination. Second, using feminism theory, the investigator will investigate the portrayal issues and concerns of women's struggle against gender biasness and sexuality in Meena Kandasamy's works. Finally, the investigator will reach a conclusion by establishing a link between the texts and their implications.

Tentative Chapter Plan

Chapter 1: Introduction: First and foremost, the first chapter will clarify and expand on the ideas of gender bias and sexuality. A quick overview of gender bias in Indian society will be provided. It will concentrate on modern feminist writers' fiction that has addressed the challenges and potential of women's experiences, particularly in terms of gender bias and sexuality. The chapter begins with a brief introduction to Indian fiction in English and Indian writers writing in English, and then shifts to Kandasamy's biography and career. A brief review of related literature will be included. The chapter will conclude with such a concept, which will be continued in upcoming chapters in light of the selected readings.

Chapter 2: Gender Biasness in the works of Meena Kandasamy: This chapter will look into many parts of Meena Kandasamy's writings to determine the core of feminism in her works. It will also seek to investigate previously unknown areas of gender inequality in order to strengthen feminist credentials. Kandasamy's protagonists are not passive victims of exploitation, but rather actively working to change their circumstances. This chapter will examine Indian cultural societal structures to evaluate whether both genders achieve equality in dominating civilizations, and if so, why. Domestic abuse, traditions, family life, and complacency all contribute to unequal power distribution among the genders and serve as the foundation for women's exploitation, as will be examined in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Sexuality in the works of Meena Kandasamy: The image of the lady in Indian English literature has evolved in the recent years. Women are harmed because society promotes submissive femininity. Kandasamy's fearlessness in debating sexual politics will be examined in this chapter. Through her characters, she comments on gender bias in social behaviours. This chapter will look at the sociology of violence against women in Indian society. This chapter will look at how the protagonist, in her rage against the experiences of marital rape and it has become the spokeswoman for this generation of women who are tired of being submissive in marriage. This chapter will present Kandasamy's viewpoint on women's reproductive and sexual autonomy. In addition, this chapter will examine how reproductive control and the exploitation of women's bodies and labour are both strategies and effects of oppressive systems based on race, class, gender, sexuality, ideology, and social structures.

Chapter 4: Major Causes of Gender Biasness and Sexuality in the works of Meena Kandasamy: Gender biasness and Sexuality are omnipresent social evil which are very much prevalent in the society even today. There are several factors

that lead to biasness and sexuality as stated by various writers. Some of them are Patriarchy, male domination, casteism, religion, cultural, social, political and financial. This chapter will examine the major causes of Gender Biasness and Sexuality in the works of Meena Kandasamy.

Chapter 5: Conclusion: The Final Evaluation The fifth and last chapter will ultimately present the findings of the research endeavour. The gender bias and unequal treatment of women in the Indian context will be discussed briefly. Kandasamy's treatment of sexuality will be presented in greater detail. It will also emphasise the concepts and strategies she used to present the key and major themes.

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